



## **Political Leadership and Public Accountability in Post-colonial Nigeria**

**Inakefe Gabriel Inakefe<sup>1\*</sup>, Bassey Virtue Uduak<sup>1</sup> and Mbonu Felix Ifenna<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Public Administration and Local Government, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.*

### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author IGI designed the study, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author BVU and Author MFI managed the literature searches, typed and edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the quest for transparency and accountability in the public sector, several political administrations have initiated public sector reforms to promote accountability and transparency in Nigeria. The paper investigates the impact of political leadership on political accountability and fiscal accountability in Nigeria. It also explains why the problem of lack of accountability has thrived despite the numerous reforms which have been introduced to abate it. Anchored in a documentary/historical research design, the paper observed that the problem of lack of accountability thrives because of legal lapses, weakness of civil society organizations, political patronage and the principle of possessive individualism/primitive capital accumulation that the country's elites are buried in. The paper recommends policy learning, adherence to the principles of the constitution and constitutionalism, civil society advocacy, and recall to engender accountability in the Nigerian public sector.

*Keywords: Leadership; public accountability; political power; electorates; post-colonial Nigeria.*

*\*Corresponding author: Email: gabriel.inakefe.pg87297@unn.edu.ng;*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Good governance remains one of the main cravings of humankind. In pursuit of this, eminent political philosophers (e.g., Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Karl Marx, Hegel, Price, and Locke), and contemporary writers have preoccupied themselves with discourses about the ideal form of government that would bring for man and society the greatest good for the greatest number. In this discourse, several strands of postulations such as representative governance, people's democracy, and democratic governance have emerged. However, in spite of the existence of these intellectual conjectures, postulations and principles, the realization of accountability which underscores them has remained blurred. Public accountability entails the sum total of actions and principles required in the operation of the Government affairs in the areas of prudent mobilization and utilization of state funds to meet the aspirations of the populace. It involves holding public officers responsible for their action(s) [1]. In this wise, Public accountability remains an essential element of democratic governance as it presents an avenue through which public officials are held liable for their action and inaction because since government is the highest spender of public money, those in possession of authority must give account of their actions to the masses whom they exercise power for [2]. Accountability has become a yardstick with which the performance of public officers' vis-à-vis agencies of government is measured [3]. It is acknowledged that public accountability is vital to public administration because elected and non-elected officials of government have the onus to demonstrate to the public that they are utilizing public money to maximize public good [4]. However, the problem of public accountability has remained an endemic one, especially for third world countries. In Nigeria for instance, the concept and notion of accountability is a notorious and controversial issue, especially as public office holders do not want to be held accountable. On account of this, the country has had series of challenges in promoting accountability to foster growth and development. This problem is attributable to defective leadership, lack of political will, elite-centeredness and lack of responsiveness and unwillingness among public officers. This narrative exists even in the face of the consensus that accountability remains an essential element of the democratic ideals and public administration. Compounding the problem

are institutional/legal lapses that constantly create lapses for those who abuse public power to navigate and escape from justice without legal consequences enabling them to continue to engage in corrupt practices.

However, several studies have ventured into the subject by assessing public accountability within the organs of government and the difficulties they face in ensuring public accountability, the novel contribution of this paper is seen in its critical analysis of problem of poor political leadership in Nigeria. It transcends the cursory examination of the problem in extant literatures that merely interrogates the phenomenon peripherally without explaining why the problem persists despite the public sector reforms that have been initiated to promote it. Since public accountability remains a condition sine qua non for the attainment of growth and development, the impact of the paper is seen in the light of the fact that it advances the discourse on the problem of poor political leadership and public accountability. Given that the problem is a rampant one in Nigeria and Africa as a whole, the paper is a timely contribution given that political leadership and representative governance makes sense only to the extent public office holders are accountable to the people. The utility and contribution of the paper is evident in its critical recommendations made to address the problem of lack of public accountability in Nigeria. The paper would be a worthy companion to public financial managers, administrators, auditors, electorates, election managers, politicians and students of public administration.

The paper bridges the lacuna in literature by focusing on examining the overall impact of political leadership on public accountability; by answering the question of why lack of public accountability thrives in the area of political leadership in the face of public sector reforms, and by proffering solutions that would bring about improvement in public accountability in Nigeria.

To achieve these aims, the paper is structured in five (5) themes which include introduction, literature review, methodology, the main aim of the work which focuses on analysis of poor political leadership and why the problem persists, and conclusion and recommendations.

### **1.1 Literature Review**

The literature review section dwells solely on literatures that border on Nigeria since the main

concern of the work is on public accountability in Nigeria.

## 1.2 Political Leadership

*Political leadership represents one of the variances of leadership, which to properly understand the concept, one must understand the concept of leadership [5]. According to Ngawube (2010) cited in [6], leadership is a process of social influence whereby a leader steers members of a group towards a goal. Essoh and Udoh (2014) quoted in [6] on their part submits that leadership is the ability to influence people to willingly and enthusiastically make their contributions to the achievement of group or national objectives. Leadership is a human endeavor which involves mobilizing, coordinating and influencing group behavior to achieve predetermined goals. Political leadership involves the sum total of traits, ethical character and the general norms (e.g., political culture and general culture) which the leader utilizes within organizational or societal set-up in the combination of material and intangible means to solve societal problems according to predetermined agenda [7]. Political leadership implies the reliance on followership as well as some innovative means to accomplish some set goals in an institutional/cultural setting (Heifetz 1994; Tucker 1995; Nye 1999; Bennis & Thomas 2002; Nye 2008 ). As applied in this work, political leadership refers to the managing and organizing of the public sector through the authoritative allocation of values by holders of political power and authority to bring about improved performance of the state and welfare of the citizenry. Political leadership involves the choice of a course of action to solve problems of private and public concern. However, Aristotle [8] was the first classical writer to classify political leadership according to the number of leaders involved and interest they serve. In this wise, Aristotle treated political leadership normatively within three schemes, namely; tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. According to him, political power is wielded by an individual for the individual leader, it is termed tyranny; when power is wielded by an individual for the benefit of a few, it is termed oligarchy, and when it power is wielded by a multitude for the common good, it is called democracy. In the modern time, democracy is extolled than the rest.*

## 1.3 Public Accountability

Asobie (1991) quoted in Sylvester [2] sees public accountability as “*the obligation owned by*

*anyone occupying a position of trust or responsibility to provide appropriate response to all stakeholders, for action carried out and/or performance achieved in the discharge of his duties”.* Egbefo [9] defines public accountability as a phenomenon, a process as well as an ideology. In this scheme, accountability is construed to mean a system where leaders are restrained from their own whims and caprices as well as immune from corruption and are positioned to act transparently [9]. Sylvester [2] lends more insight into the subject of accountability by focusing on it from two polemic points – answerability and enforceability. The author views the former as involving the obligation of government, its officials and agencies to inform the public about its operation and to justify same before the public and statutory agencies charged with the duty of oversight. The second aspect, according to the author involves the ability of the public and agencies given the power of oversight to mete out sanctions on any government official found wanting in the process. Bovens (2006) cited in Sylvester [2] operationalized public accountability into definitive forms- organizational accountability, political accountability, legal accountability, and professional accountability. According to the author, organizational accountability refers to a situation where a superior official within an agency asks a subordinate under his rank to account for his activities and actions; political accountability refers to a process where political office holders are required to give account of their stewardship over the exercise of public power; legal accountability refers to a situation where public office holders are summoned by courts over cases of abuse of public power, and professional accountability refers to a situation where professionals (e.g., accountants, doctors, and engineers) are required to adhere strictly to their professional ethics. Ekanem [10] sees public accountability as comprised of administrative accountability, fiscal accountability and political accountability. The author posits that administrative accountability involves a process in which holders of political portfolios account to their appointee – the Prime Minister or the President as the case may be. According to the writer, administrative accountability flow through the pyramidal barrels of the bureaucratized structure of the public service. In a Federal set-up and at state level, the Permanent Secretaries and the Ministries account to the Governor who account to the legislature and electorate [10]. Ekanem submits that fiscal accountability deals

with the use of state funds by public officers while political accountability deals with the sum-total of all the functions and duties government owe the people. Appraising public accountability from its political dimension in the light of representative governance, Ekanem contends that:

*A typical civilian leader of government who assumed power through popular election must have made electioneering promises to capture votes. Wreckless as some of them may be, they still bear in mind the fact that one day, at the expiration of their tenure, they would have cause to canvass for yet more votes for another tenure and would be asked what they did with the first mandate. It is then the responsibility of such politicians to account for their stewardship. If they fail to convince the people, everything being equal, they are voted out [10].*

The foregoing quotation highlights the fact that the possession of political power comes with the duty of public accountability to members of the public with whom actual power lies in democracy. The maximization of the welfare of the people through the political decision making through authoritative allocation of values constitutes real political accountability. More readings into the quotation reveal that real sovereignty in democracy resides in the people (electorate) who are given the power of political recruitment through the electioneering process. It is with this power that all things being equal, they decide who govern them or not based on their rating and judgment of a given public officer.

Peter Bird [11] on the other hand sees public accountability especially from the fiscal aspect of it. The author offers that:

*Every steward is held accountable to the person or body which entrusted resources to him whether the latter is a superior steward or the ultimate owner. Accountability places two obligations upon a steward: he must render an account of his dealing with the stewardship resources, and then he must submit to an examination (usually known as an audit) of that account by or on behalf of the person or body to whom he is accountable. This means that he must not only allow the audit to take place, but he must provide the evidence from which the auditor can verify the account rendered. This double duty of stewards, including an audit, has a*

*long and continuous history. The need for independent check or control (inspection or audit) lies deep in human history.*

As applied in this work, accountability relates more with fiscal accountability and political accountability.

#### **1.4 Rationale for Public Accountability**

With the advent of democracy, public accountability has received considerable admiration. In the literature [9,12], public accountability is not distanced much from democracy and good governance since most authors see it as its essential ingredient. This is because democracy as a form of government does not only foster citizen participation but ensure citizen welfare is at the heart of government decision making processes. Hence, the general public request on government officials to be prudent in utilization of public money for service delivery and discharge of government functions (Obazee, 2006 quoted in Sylvester [2]).

Akpan (1982) cited in [10] traced the history of public accountability to 1266AD, when Simon De Montford:

*Summoned a meeting of King and country representatives in England to express public protest and disapproval of King Henry III's extravagances in the use and expenditure of public money raised through taxes. They told Henry III that they would no longer pay taxes for the purpose of his upkeep and administration of the realm unless they are represented in the King's council. It was that incident that led to the birth of the British parliament, with the House of Commons having the sole power to approve and supervise the King's budget. In other words, the power to levy taxes would be expended and later to satisfy itself that the funds approved had been properly used, and for the purpose intended, before granting the King more funds. To make sure of everything the King was to be voted money for personal and public purposes once a year. That was how the philosophy and doctrine of no taxation without representation came into being.*

Though in modern times, the procedure is quite analogous to the one just described above in ensuring public accountability, the significance of

the citation can be seen in other ways, namely how the legislature came to acquire the power of appropriation and control of the executive arm of government through budgetary allocation [10].

In this vein, the issue of public accountability lies in the fact that government is established solely to meet the needs of the people. It is on this premise that Turc (1997 p. 1) cited in Sylvester [2] submits that, "*Society has a right to require of every public agent an account of his administration... All citizens have a right to decide either personally or through their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution.... and to know what uses it is put*".

Theoretically, the relevance of public accountability finds credence in the social contract theory espoused by Thomas Hobbes. The theory from its cardinal tenets justifies public accountability since from the lens of the theory the state and government emerged out of the agreement that ensued among men to surrender part of their rights to a sovereign who will carter for the wellbeing of the populace. The need for public accountability resonate further when one bear in mind that the possession of political power is born from the social contract between the people and public office holders through the electioneering process that produced them; and that political power in democracies requires legitimacy towards the government because it is taxpayers' money that the government is using. Gleaned from this perspective, accountability has ideal meaning when political leaders use state power and resources responsibly and prudently to maximize the citizen welfare. *This is the essence of fiscal accountability and political accountability. Democracy would be elusive if the citizenry cannot hold their political leaders accountable for their actions and inactions as well as the use of public funds* [13]. Accountability should entail being responsive and transparent in the area of public spending in conformity with legislations propriety, value for money, and effective management, and performance against set objectives and delivery of appreciable level of services to the people Stanley (2000) cited in Ejere [14].

At any rate, public accountability is a potential element that possesses the capacity to foreclose the potentially volatile edges of corruption in furthering democratic governance, growth and development. Against the backdrop, Egbefo [12] argued for the adoption of public accountability to abate corruption at the grassroots level to better the lots of rural dwellers in Nigeria.

In recognition of the value of public accountability, several institutional and legal frameworks have been initiated by past political administrations to promote public accountability to make political leaders to be accountable to the masses. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 15 (5) lends legal backing to public accountability when it provided that "the state shall abolish all form of corrupt practices and abuse of power". Section 13 also states that all organs of government reposed with legislative, executive and judicial powers and their officials should hitherto conform to such powers as stipulated in the constitution. Section 14 (2) (a) of the constitution back public accountability when it provided that 'sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives all its powers and authority'. Sections 69 and 110 also further political accountability when it provided for recall [15], a process through which constituents of a particular political constituency can withdraw and disengage members of the Senate or House of Assembly on the grounds of non-performance. Section 224 which stipulate that the programme as well as the aims and objectives of a political party should be in line with provisions of Chapter II of this Constitution further public accountability with its reference to responsibility, transparency and accountability [13]. The provisions that allow for impeachment of public officers who are not accountable, principles of periodic elections, right to vote and be voted for and party system are built-in mechanisms designed to further the spirit of public accountability [13]. Section 52(1) and 94(1 and 2) makes provision for the declaration of assets of members of the Senate and House of the Assembly to prevent illicit acquisition of the commonwealth for personal enrichment [15]. Sections 80-84 and 120-124 of the constitution empowered the legislative branch at the state and federal level to oversee public spending by the executive arm [15].

Other are financial laws that specify and assign functions and roles to the various functionaries of government (President, Vice President, Ministers, Governors, Deputy Governors, and Commissioners) which stipulates that the said public officers should adhere to financial ethics in finance mobilization and utilization. According to section 74(4) of the 1979 constitution, even the President cannot do whatever he likes with the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) [10]. The section states inter-alia that no monies shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Revenue Fund

except in the manner prescribed by the national assembly; section 82 of the same constitution confer powers on the National Assembly to conduct investigations for the purpose of uncovering corruption and waste of funds appropriated by it [10].

Aside the constitutional provisions designed to ensure public accountability, other administrative agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau, Fiscal Responsibility Commission, and the Public Complaint Commission have been established. Sections 1(1), 2(1)(a), Section 44, 16, 49 and 50 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2007 created the Fiscal Responsibility Commission and invested it with the powers to compel any government agency to provide information regarding its revenues and expenditure; the Act also stipulated the conditions for borrowing by government agencies, provision of report of its budget execution, as well as extending right to Nigerians to approach the courts for the enforcement of the Act without having to show any special interest [16]. The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) were established in 2000 and 2002 respectively under Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 and EFCC Establishment Act 2002 by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to ensure accountability in the public sector [16].

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes the documentary and historical research methodology. Documentary research involves the use of outside sources or documents which can be quantitative or qualitative to vitiating and support the viewpoint of a position or argument in an academic work [17]. Documents such as textbooks, journals and publications by national and international agencies are used. These are secondary sources. These documents are used because they contain vital information that helps to illuminate the subject under enquiry. Historical research method is "a brand of research that deals with the determination, evaluation and explanation of past events essentially for the purpose of getting a better and comprehensive understanding of the present and making a more reliable prediction for the future" (Obasi, 1999 cited in [18]). The justification for the use of both documentary and historical research methods for

the study is because both methods enables the study to rely on existing documents/historical documents to investigate the subject of political leadership and public accountability since 1960 when the country gained independence.

Being a qualitative research, content analysis involving a retrospective analysis of literatures in Nigeria was used to analyze the data collected to present a valid discussion from empirical examples. This involved the use of text narration to read meaning out of the data collected. Quantitative data were used as supporting details to the qualitative data. The article is organically structured in themes to make it easy to read and understand the paper's submissions.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Political Leadership and Public Accountability in Nigeria: The Scenario

In spite the level of reforms and constitutional provisions that exists, the level of public accountability is remarkably low in Nigeria. Public accountability seems to be regressing arithmetically with each passing administration. *Effective and efficient public service delivery to the citizenry has continually degenerated as a result of lack of accountability* [19] among political leaders. Providing a historical analysis of public accountability in Nigeria, Omolehinwa [20] reckons that public accountability within the era of the erstwhile military regimes was at its lowest ranking with the reckless disbursement of public monies without the awareness of the Minister of Finance. Citing Ani [21], *the author offered that between January and May 1998, the Military Leader (General Sani Abacha) had withdrawn up to the tune of US\$450 million from the country's apex bank (CBN) without the knowledge of the Minister of Finance.* He highlighted the lack of public accountability within the military in the following way:

Not only were the accounts of the last five years of military rule not available as at end of the last millennium, the accounts that were rendered cannot be regarded as reliable because there is no relationship between the figures given by the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance.

*It is alleged that the regimes of General Sani Abacha and Ibrahim Babangida were notoriously corrupt* [22]. On assumption of office, the He did

not only put in an auto reversed gear the corruption crusade of his predecessors (Murtala Mohamed and Mohamed Buhari) but *reinstated the dismissed military Governors and the return of properties confiscated to them* [4]. Abacha's administration was also legendary in corruption as the world still briefed periodically on the extent of his detonation of financial missiles on the public purse through recovered loots that Nigeria keeps receiving from foreign countries and international financial organizations. This development comes on the back of the justifications the military advanced for seizing power from the first republic politicians. The military did not act better in abating corruption but aggravated it exponentially.

Repressive and undemocratic as the military regimes were, one may pause and wonder how accountable democratic governments have being since the country's return to democratic governance in May 1999. Focusing on examining public accountability in the post-military era, Egbefo [9] *appraised and showcased the anti-democratic and dictatorial tendencies of the Obasanjo led administration which clamped down opposition leaders, trade unions, etc.* which fanned the embers of a potentially volatile and restive pollution as repressive violence was his watch word. *Odi and Zaki-Biam are some of the notorious episodes that are characteristic of his administration* [9]. Citing Salmi [23], Egbefo corroborates that some aspects of reprehensive violence that serves as a countercurrent against public accountability in the era has to do with denial of freedom of expression, freedom to belong to trade unions, or embarking on an industrial action. This situation is quite a rampant phenomenon in the African continent where leaders exhibit some dictatorial tendencies. Odoh [24] *asserts that the recurring problem of bad governance in Nigeria has to do with political leaders' insistence on having the exclusive pronouncement in public policy.* This phenomenon does not create fertile grounds public accountability.

The prevalence of corruption in the fourth republic is also one that cannot be ignored. Chief Evans Enwerem, Adolphons Nwabara and Chuba Okadigbo were impeached during the era on account of corruption [25]. Also, Senator Chimaroke Nnamani within the period faced 124 count charges bothering on conspiracy, fraud and money laundry of about 5.4 million naira [26]. *Madam Patricia Olubunmi Etehe who happened to be the first female speaker of the*

*country's House of Representatives was compelled to resign over allegations of involvement in 628 million Naira contract scandal in the renovation of official residence and purchase of 12 cars* [4]. The revelations are unending. Senator Iyabo Obasanjo Bello scandalous embezzlement of 3.5 billion Naira and her mismanagement of the federal ministry of health occasioned the resignation of Mrs. Adenike Grainge and her Deputy, Architect Gabriel Aduku [27] *adds to the litany of corruption cases.* Former Vice President, *Atiku Abubakar was also said to be culpable of financial misgivings as he was linked to the diversion of US \$145 million Petroleum Technology Development Fund* [25, 27]. On 4th May 2008, a senior officer of the Ministry of Agriculture stated in *Punch newspaper that between 2001 and 2007, Nigeria lost 22.2 billion in a fertilizer scam* [28]. Other high profile cases of corruption is that involving former Governor of Ekiti state, Ayo Fayose, involvement in embezzlement of N1.2billion; Aminu Turaki (N36billion); Chief Bode George (N100billion); Rasheed Ladoja, former Governor of Oyo State (N6billion); Adamu Abdullahi, former Governor of Nasarawa State (N15billion); Senator Nicholas Ugbade (N5.2billion); Attahiru Bafarawa, former Governor of Sokoto State (N15billion); and former Governor of Anambra state, Governor Ken Nnamani and two of his former Commissioners, Peter Mba and Spine Ejiofor were alleged to have embezzled 5.6 billion Naira [29, 30, 31, 32]. According to Ojakaminor [33] and Lawan (2009) cited in [15], *the Senate under the leadership of Chuba Okadigbo was heavily embroiled in reckless financial dealings without regard to financial laws and the constitution.* The authors also provide that Chuba Okadigbo infamously approved for himself 37 million Naira as against the stipulated 25 million Naira as furniture allowance for senators. Also, *Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, who received ten million naira as her own largesse of the unspent 2007 budget of Ministry of Health which she served as its Senate Committee Chairman, was arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in 2008 for corrupt practices* (Alabi, Olujinmi & Fashagba, 2010, Aliu, 2013 cited in [15].

The administration of the erstwhile President Goodluck Jonathan have also had public accountability perception crisis as most of his cabinet members have been charged and arraigned in court over illicit enrichment and gruesome corruption. On October 12, 2017, a Nigerian court ordered the forfeiture of 56

properties worth between \$5.5m and \$17m linked to the former minister of oil, Diezani Alison-Madueke, in corruption related cases [34].

Nigeria's legislators have been indicted in other dimensions of corruption and white collar crimes. It is reported that Senators request kickbacks and incentives before approving budgetary provisions and other government appointments. Former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, *Mallam Nasir El-Rufai alleged that Senators Nasiru Ibrahim Mantu and Jonathan Zwingina requested he pay the sum of fifty four (N54m) million naira before he could be considered for ministerial appointment* (Ologbenla, 2007, Lawan, 2009 cited in [15]). Alluding to the rampaging nature of corruption in the political arena, one time Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairman, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, declared that \$400 billion which had been looted from the Commonwealth by public officers is six times greater than the sum utilized in rebuilding Western Europe after WW2 [42]. In 2009, *the audit report tendered by the Auditor-General of the Federation revealed that MDA's of the federal government did not only contravened Financial Regulations, but also Public Service Rules and Due Process* [14].

Given the litany of these cases of corruption, it is explainable why the country has been ranked low in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. In 2008, the agency ranked Nigeria 144<sup>th</sup> out of the 180 countries listed [17]. In the year 2012, it was estimated that since independence, the country has lost \$400 billion to corruption [35]. Though the constitution and financial rules provide for ways the public sector ought to be governed as well as the roles expected from political leaders to ensure public accountability, these provisions are violated repeatedly.

In the area of political accountability, political office holders have not given anything more than a clue. Since the country's independence, the country's need for quality education, good roads, healthcare facilities, pipe borne water, and electricity have remained unchanged as they have remained fertile grounds from where campaign promises are made during every electioneering period. Certainly, progress has been made but it is essentially that of one step forward and two steps backward. Consequently, the quest for durable conditions that make for average living will not go away but endure in

spite of the litany of campaign promises that the politicians periodically dish out during elections. This is attributable to elite-centeredness and poor leadership. *Lack of political accountability have been a clog that impede the progress of the country as leaders (both past and present) have shown they are incapacitated in offering quality leadership that will navigate the country out of the seemingly unending challenges confronting it* [36]. Achebe (1983) quoted in [6] *affirms that the problem with Nigeria lies squarely with failure in leadership*. In any society where leaders are reprehensive of public accountability, the given society is bound to face developmental challenges and corruption [37]. As a result of low public accountability, most public enterprises have also not tendered their audit reports and annual financial report [38].

In the face of poor political leadership and bad governance that have held the country bound in the chains of underdevelopment, several petitions for recall which involve the removal from office of some leaders on the grounds of poor representation has been attempted through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to remove some political leaders through the process of recall. But all these have ended in monumental fiasco. Mockery is made off this as political leaders who have incompatible and irreconcilable interests and differences have opted to utilize it as an instrument of destabilization. The reality is that the process itself is cumbersome such that the electorates are incapacitated in utilizing it. Also, the expectation that political leaders would be accountable to the people fizzle out with knowledge of the high profile corruption, fraud and illegality that is characteristic of the country's electoral processes that bring politicians to power. Without real electoral legitimacy, it will be strange and shocking to expect public accountability from political leaders who did not earned the mandate of the people [39] since they are inclined to observe the detects of those who provided them some strategic help to bring them to power.

When one take fully into consideration all these, one is compelled to believe that public accountability is elusive and is unattainable in the Nigerian public sector given the enormous corrupt practices and misrepresentation that are perpetuated by political leaders.



### 3.2 Understanding the Problem of Lack of Political and Fiscal Accountability in Nigeria: Gainful Insights

*Nigeria is endowed with abundance of human and natural resources but grossly lacks public accountability [40]. The country has made considerable effort to achieve public accountability but it is paradoxical that the country is still besieged by the endemic problem of lack of accountability. This situation is explainable. The first point of reference in answering the question of why public accountability has remained elusive has to do with the perception of the Nigerian public officers and weakness of the country's anti-graft agencies. Ekanem [10] tied this perception to the ideology of primitive wealth accumulation to which Nigerians have been exposed to right from the colonial era. He acknowledges that this historical antecedent now shape their own perception and determine their own core values. According to Osoba (1977) quoted in Ekanem [10], the built-in mechanisms for us of government establishments to accumulate private wealth has since been documented by practitioners of this ideology as early as when Nigeria got independence. Ekanem [10] also explains that "in a scenario of primitive accumulation and a cultural system that applauds fraud by elevating the social status of the perpetrators of embezzlement, it is not difficult to explain why public corporations have been converted to gold mines". The problem also cannot be detached much from political patronage. Appointment into the management of public corporation is seen as a way of rewarding those who as clients gave them strategic political support. Under this arrangement, accountability cannot be expected. Public servants and political leaders view the public service as an instrument through which their personal lives can be bettered through illicit practices which culminate into mismanagement, misallocation and embezzlement [4]. Omotoye [41] traces the endemic lack of accountability in the Nigerian public sector to lack of accountability culture and presence of weak institutions to implement rules that foster accountability. This kind of a system is enabled by political patronage and affiliation to the ruling party at a given time as politicians use their political networks to pervade justice and escape from the net of anti-graft agencies. As a demonstration of this, the Inspector General of Police in 2006 was convicted on eight count charges on theft of \$100 while in office but was subsequently released without trial [40,41].*

Though anti-graft agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) were established to ensure fiscal accountability in the public sector, these agencies have over the decades been embroiled in cases of corruption and re-looting of recovered funds. The reports that emanated from the Justice Salami led committee that culminated to the suspension of the erstwhile chairman of the EFCC, Ibrahim Magu, come readily at hand. *This kind of scenario evokes public skepticism and trust issues over government agencies approach towards public accountability [19]. Adejuwon [4] drew inferences from lack of fiscal accountability and linked it to poor political leadership when he acknowledged that huge financial resources are often earmarked in the budgetary profile but due to lack of accountability, the problems of infrastructural decay, unemployment, collapse of social infrastructures still persist.*

Another contributory factor has to do with defective resource appropriation. *Public accountability in the Nigeria public sector suffers from inadequacy of financial resources as well as poor utilization. This problem is compounded by corruption that hinders the prudent use of scarce resources [12]. Administrative procedures which would have furthered accountability in the public sector are replete with corruption [42]. This allows perpetrators of corruption to escape justice.*

Weakness of the Civil Society is another. Civil societies in most countries play a significant role in fostering public accountability through advocacy and ensuring that public officers are accountable for their actions. But *the reality is that Nigeria's civil society organizations are weak and are incapacitated by weak leadership, political and religious factionalism that generates internal contradiction within its membership [12]. The citizenry have also not helped in demanding accountability. Nigerians over the years have shown apathy and disinterest towards holding their leaders accountable for the impunity and mismanagement they exhibit while in office [6].*

The fourth factor has to do with lack of commitment and aggressive drive for public accountability by the populace. *This has to do with its non-combative drive to spearhead and demand for accountability in the public sector since public accountability and good governance is often demanded by the people in most situations [12].*

The fifth factor has to do with complexities and lack of coordination of government institutions. The issue of public accountability is hampered due to the complexities in the structure and coordination of agencies of government. *Many institutions of government in the past decades have operated and functioned as different business entities thereby resulting in complex and disjointed communications which breeds inefficiency and ineffectiveness which escalate the cost of rendering public services* [19]. *Meeting the ever increasing demands of citizens in this condition with constraints in government budgets becomes a problem for governments* [43].

Six, *autocratic or patron-clientele relations in political processes, involvement of public servants in private business, poor terms and conditions of service, deterioration of professionalism in the public service and ethnicity and nepotism are among the factors nursing lack of accountability in the Nigeria public sector* Adejuwon [19].

Lastly, institutional/legal lapses and immunities granted to public officers while in office which enable them to escape justice. *An example of such legal lapses is found in sections 36 and 61(3) of the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission Act and 5 (i) (k) and 39 of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act which placed on the Attorney-General of the Federation other than the named agencies the powers to initiate proceedings against those who violate ethics of accountability* [44]. The provisions in the Public Officers Protection Act which provides that public officers are immune from court litigations against them while in office also water down accountability. In other advanced climes, public officers operate within the detects of the law and are held liable for any abuse of power while in power. But in Nigeria, Public officers are seen perpetuating acts that tower above the constitution and still go unpunished. Also, in Nigeria constitutionalism and the rule of law are in abeyance. This explains why *the incumbent President and other past political leaders (e.g., Presidents, Senators, and Governors) and appointed officials have infringed on the provisions of the constitution and escaped justice* [13]. This predicament is worsened more by the attitude of the legislative branch which ordinarily ought to moderate and check the excesses of other arms of government. *They are engrossed in the incentive packages from the executive to the extent that, though fully*

*aware of the provisions of the law, they become entirely passive and indifferent* [15].

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is given by the abundance of evidence and facts that public accountability (both in the area of political accountability and fiscal accountability) is lacking in Nigeria's public sector given the anarchy that is perpetuated by its public officers. Financial and constitutional ground norms that ideally should shape and moderate the activities and conduct of public officers for enhanced performance are vagrantly violated and ridiculed. This phenomenon is occasioned by the spirit of possessive individualism and primitive elite-centeredness, corruption, and legal and institutional lapses. In the face of the public sector reforms, poor political leadership has hindered the realization of political and fiscal accountability.

Given the litany of problems that besiege public accountability in the Nigerian, the following options can be considered:

1. Public officers, especially political office holders should inculcate the spirit of people's democracy. People's democracy involves the process whereby the plight and predicament of the citizenry are the determinant and moderating factors in the policy decision process.
2. Public ethics should be inculcated in the citizenry to produce ethical leadership and followership. This can take the form of developing education curriculum that will teach ethics and instill morality in the citizenry. Ethics and corruption which is currently taught as a compulsory course in the country's tertiary institutions should be enhanced and taught with vigor.
3. Public accountability can be improved through policy learning. Nigeria should learn from other models developed by other states and adapt them to suit its ecological setting. Policy learning in this regard should focus on learning and identifying ways to build the capacity of institutions to function optimally in crime detection and prevention.
4. The populace should strive to demand for good governance through advocacy. They should demand for responsive and accountable government. This could be accompanied with voting and giving strategic political support to public office

- holders who have made returns on previous mandate(s) given them.
5. Institutional reforms should be made to strengthen the country's anti-graft agencies to be able to fulfill their mandate. Such reforms should cover areas of human capital development in the area of fraud identification, detection and prevention. Reforms that border on determining and giving time duration for the prosecution of fraud cases should be made to aid justice administration to avoid prolonged litigations. Existing legal frameworks should be appraised and detected lapses that enable culprits of corruption to escape from the net of justice should be amended.
  6. Recall which is provided by the constitution which empower the people to vote to remove political leaders who have not made any impact on the people should be activated by the led to remove any non-performing public officer who is not working according to the detects of the people. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should with all sense of diligence treat all petitions brought before it by the electorates by initiating the recall process within 90 days as stipulated in the constitution. Reforms should also be made to address the lapses in the Electoral Act that inhibit it from undertaking its functions diligently.
  7. Institutional building should be furthered to enable all agencies involved in public sector operation to optimally undertake their assigned mandate.
  8. The principle and ethos of constitutionalism should be furthered. Public officers should not be granted any immunity that water down or restrict the applicability of any provision of the constitution. Public officers should be held liable for crimes perpetuated while in office. The extant laws that apply to the average citizen should be applied to public officers respective of their rank or status. As the law treats Mr. A, so it should treat Mr. B.
  9. The citizenry should refrain from being apolitical and apathetic towards politics, governance and national issues by developing active political culture. They should also demand inclusiveness in governance.
  10. Civil society organizations should develop town hall meetings in different political

constituencies to periodically enlighten and educate the masses on prevailing state and national issues that touch on public accountability.

11. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to conduct free and credible elections. This process should be as credible as much as possible to produce political leaders who earned the votes of the electorate. In this way, such elected public office holders would be accountable to the people.
12. The instrument of checks and balances must be applied as reasonable as possible. The three arms of government (the executive, legislature and judiciary) must keep watch on each other to ensure that none acts arbitrarily or in excess of its arrogated powers.
13. There must be an organization other than that which is investigated to do independent audit and investigation of government agencies. The process must be accurate, open, timely and transparent. Reports of such audit should be implemented to the letters.

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